



***Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
August 26-30, 2013***

Recently launched Aboriginal Relations Unit a positive step, say police

[Metro Edmonton](#)

August 27, 2013

Annalise Klingbeil



Metro / Annalise Klingbeil Staff Sgt. Dan Jones is assisting with setting up the Aboriginal Relations Unit.

Two months [after it was launched with the dedication of a hand-painted teepee](#), the Edmonton Police Service's Aboriginal Relations Unit has received a "positive response," says the Chief of police.

The teepee, which has travelled to various summer festivals, is one of several efforts being made by the force to strengthen relationships with aboriginal Edmontonians through the creation of the unit.

The force is looking at establishing an "elder's committee" made up of three or four elders who can assist officers "from a cultural level."

And next year, EPS officers will receive aboriginal culture training in addition to their regular patrol training.

The Aboriginal Relations Unit, which consists of one civilian and one police officer, aims to enhance relationships with the aboriginal community, recruit from the aboriginal community and educate current employees about the aboriginal community.

Staff Sgt. Dan Jones, who is assisting with setting up the unit, said the relationship between officers and the aboriginal community, "is something the police service has needed to work on significantly."

"We're doing the right thing now," he said.

Police Chief Rod Knecht said the force has been "historically ill-equipped" when working with aboriginal people.

"We're not going to change that overnight but we're certainly along a better path," he told media last week.

Jones said other police forces across the country have specific aboriginal units and Edmonton police will be learning from them.

"We don't want to reinvent the wheel," he said.

Both Jones and police Chief Rod Knecht said it's expected Edmonton will have the highest urban aboriginal population in Canada in the next two to four years.

City Hall honours anniversary of Treaty 6 agreement

[CBC News](#)

Aug 23, 2013 1:13 PM MT



A ceremony was held at City Hall Friday morning to honour a year since Mayor Stephen Mandel and Treaty 6 chiefs signed a memorandum of cooperation. (Lydia Neufeld/CBC)

Mayor Stephen Mandel met with Treaty 6 chiefs at City Hall this morning to recognize the one-year anniversary of their pledge to cooperate more closely.

The agreement was signed in the spirit of recognizing the value aboriginal peoples bring to the city and to strengthen the relationship between the municipality and surrounding treaty nations.

Chief Ron Morin from the Enoch Cree Nation, just west of Edmonton, said there has been some progress in the past year, however he added there is still a long way to go when it comes to creating a healthy economy.

"There are many First Nations that do not have a very strong commerce sector," he said.

"There's many First Nations that are struggling with borderline third world conditions when we've seen all the prosperity around us -- and especially in Alberta and the Edmonton economy -- and many First Nations have not prospered as much."

Mandel said the city and community leaders need to work together to find ways to help First Nations people succeed after moving to Edmonton.

The city of Edmonton is expected to soon become the city with the largest urban aboriginal population in Canada, surpassing Winnipeg.

Attawapiskat election under shadow of controversy: Off-reserve members unable to cast ballots unless they make long, expensive trip to reserve

[Montreal Gazette](#)

August 27, 2013

Teresa Smith



Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence and the current band council are requiring ballots to be cast in person on the reserve Tuesday. Of the First Nation's 3,351 members, just 1,862 live on the reserve. Photograph by: Sean Kilpatrick, THE CANADIAN PRESS

OTTAWA — With band council elections for the Attawapiskat First Nation set for Tuesday, some off-reserve members are still hoping the chief and council will postpone the vote to deal with widespread concerns the band's electoral process is unfair.

The current band council and Chief Theresa Spence, who gained national attention for fasting on Victoria Island during the height of the Idle No More protests, are requiring ballots to be cast in person on the reserve Tuesday, making it difficult for band members who live outside the remote northern Cree community to have a say in Attawapiskat's leadership.

Of the First Nation's 3,351 members, just 1,862 live on the reserve, according to July 2013 numbers from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

"I can't afford to go all the way there," said Jocelyn Iahtail, who lives in Ottawa with her daughter. She left the reserve so her son could get the constant medical care he needs for a traumatic brain injury suffered during surgery. "They, of all people, should understand poverty and make it possible for off-reserve members to have a voice."

On Monday, a return flight from the northern Ontario community of Timmins to Attawapiskat was selling for \$1,200. A return ticket from Ottawa was more than \$2,000.

From Fort Albany Cree Nation, where Attawapiskat member Mike Koostachin lives, a return ticket costs \$400. He can't really afford to spend that money, but Koostachin said he'll be making the trek to cast his ballot in person.

"Transparency in Attawapiskat is at zero per cent," he said. "In my opinion, incompetent people are running our government system, and the same people are running for council again."

Koostachin was on a special committee of Attawapiskat band members that drafted a new custom election code in early 2010 to bring the band in line with the Supreme Court of Canada's 1999 Corbiere decision, which says all members of a First Nation over the age of 18 — whether they live on- or off-reserve — are entitled to participate in band elections.

Records of community meetings show people also wanted to prevent council members from holding other positions of influence at the same time. In response, the draft code included measures to prevent abuse of power: it put down in writing that councillors should not appoint friends or family members to the band's decision-making bodies, such as the education authority, health services, and Attawapiskat Resources Inc. — which manages the money the band receives from nearby mining developments in the Ring of Fire.

It also stipulated that councillors cannot have a criminal record, and could only miss three consecutive council meetings before being dismissed.

Community members voted to approve the new code in June 2010, but former chief Theresa Hall and the band council of the day decided not to ratify it since only 74 of a possible 2,166 eligible voters cast a ballot.

Instead, the former council conducted the August 2010 band elections using the old custom code, which has never been formally written down and which Iahtail and others say leads to confusion.

Koostachin wants the council to postpone the election, ratify the 2010 custom election code and start with a fresh nomination process so everyone can have their say.

Reached at his home in Attawapiskat Monday morning, acting chief Christopher Kataquapit said he couldn't discuss details of Tuesday's election and wasn't available for an interview.

A representative at the Attawapiskat band office Monday said no one from council was available for an interview. There was no answer Monday at the home of Spence.

"We're not denying any people from voting; they can come here to vote," this year's electoral officer, Louie Noah, said Monday. Noah expects about 400 of the Attawapiskat First Nation's more than 2,100 eligible voters to turn out Tuesday.

Noah says he took the job in mid-July because "nobody else wanted to do it." By that time, he said it was too late to organize off-reserve polling stations and, anyway, it would have been too expensive.

"It would be nice to have that election code," he said. "But it would cost a lot of money to get the mail-in ballots and send them out all over the country: it would be almost \$10,000."

While he admits the election process is divisive, he said he's confident Tuesday's election will go off without a hitch. "There's going to be complaints as usual, but it will die down."

Charles Hookimaw, 31, moved to North Bay, Ont. about five years ago to care for his mother, who needed to be closer to health services available in the city. He says he has been concerned about the election process since the last time members went to the polls in August 2010.

Hookimaw's close friend Greg Shisheesh, who has since died, was a candidate for chief in that election and contested its outcome after a recount of the 345 ballots cast showed he was actually the winner. Electoral officer Rebecca Iahtail (a cousin

to Jocelyn) had initially declared it a tie, with 171 votes each going to Spence and Shisheesh.

According to band custom, Rebecca Iahtail, who is also an employee of the band council, broke the tie and made Spence chief. When the community demanded a recount, it showed 172 votes for Spence and 173 for Shisheesh, but Iahtail ruled the earlier count should stand and Spence was made chief.

Shisheesh appealed the outcome to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) through the official appeals process set up by the Indian Act. In a letter to the electoral officer and AANDC's regional director and deputy minister, Shisheesh cited misrepresentation of votes, a poorly publicized election process, and what he suspects was pressure on the part of the band council to explain the problem.

Hookimaw said Shisheesh "never heard back" from AANDC about the appeals process and that nothing has changed.

So when elders in the community grew concerned early this spring they hadn't heard anything about how this year's election would be conducted, Hookimaw decided to write some letters of his own. In May and June, Hookimaw emailed Spence, Noah, council members, band manager Wayne Turner and AANDC representatives outlining his concerns. He got a variety of answers. Spence said the band would follow the Indian Act election rules, Noah said they would follow the old custom rules and a representative from AANDC said he should take his concerns to the chief and council.

Jocelyn Iahtail has also written about her concerns to every authority figure she can think of: the Ontario Provincial Police, AANDC, the RCMP, members of Parliament, the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council (which includes Attawapiskat), and the Assembly of First Nations.

"They all know about the problems but, for us, there's no recourse," she said. "There's no protection. Where do we go for help? We've gone everywhere that you can think of and we're told the very same thing that everyone else is told: consult with your chief and council. But, if our chief and council are not willing to even respond or speak about it, where do we go?"

"It's a broken system," Hookimaw said Monday. "I think it's important we do things fairly to give everyone a chance."

"We have an over \$10-million deficit and none of the candidates have addressed that and said how they're going to proceed and what are the effective solutions."

"There are plenty of educated people from Attawapiskat," said Jocelyn Iahtail, who also takes issue with the low profile of the band council candidate nomination process. "We've got doctors and lawyers and accountants who are living off-reserve so they can get a job, go to school, or for health reasons. They need to be part of this process if anything is going to change."

Iahtail said friends and family living in Attawapiskat who feel the same way are afraid to come forward because the chief and council control housing, health, education and finances for the band and they don't want to be punished.

"This current structure is not working and we're repeating it again and again and again," she said, noting that other First Nations have benefited from updating their election codes. "There are a lot of functional and healthy bands. Ours is not."

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Inuit women's leader pleased with Harper meeting, stresses human needs

[Nunatsiq News](#)

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Rebecca Kudloo, president of the Pauktuutit national Inuit women's association, Cathy Towtongie, president of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., and Jobie Tukkiapik, president of Makivik Corp., at the Aug. 22 meeting in Rankin Inlet and Prime Minister Stephen Harper. (FILE PHOTO)

Rebecca Kudloo, the president of the Pauktuutit Inuit women's association, said in a statement Aug. 26 that she was "pleased to represent the views of Inuit women" at last week's meeting, held Aug. 22, [between Inuit](#)

[leaders and Prime Minister Stephen Harper.](#)

Kudloo said the healthy development of the Arctic requires jobs and economic security but she also said the Arctic has "significant human needs" that require attention.

"For example, we have the highest rates of violence in the country, and a suicide rate that is 10 times the national average. [We just had an 11-year-old child commit suicide in Nunavut,](#)" Kudloo said in her statement.

She said this would not be considered acceptable in any part of Canada.

And she said Pauktuutit welcomes the opportunity to work in partnership with the federal government on a range of health and social issues.

Students from Sask. day school sue for abuse, "ethnocide"

[Regina Leader-Post](#)

August 23, 2013

Barb Pacholik



First Nations bands members gather to listen to the apology by Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, for the residential schools that native children were forced to go to on June 11, 2008 in Cranbrook, B.C. Here, Laureen Allard (blue shirt) who was in a residential school for ten years, gets a hug from, Kay Shottanana, (right). Photograph by: Ian Smith, Vancouver Sun

The students may have gone home at the end of each day, but a new lawsuit filed in Regina suggests aboriginal children who attended day schools suffered the same mistreatment as those in Indian residential schools.

And they too want compensation for enduring years of abuse as well as a loss of culture and language.

"The nightmarish legacy left by these day schools has and will continue to affect many generations," contends the proposed class-action lawsuit filed by Regina lawyer Tony Merchant.

It's the first of several suits Merchant Law Group plans to file across the country in a bid to get compensation for day school students. There were about 250 day schools nationwide — approximately 15 or so of those in this province.

"Day schools and residential schools and the Metis schools — all the same things were happening. But only residential schools have as yet been addressed," Merchant said in an interview Friday.

The suit, filed this week in Court of Queen's Bench, names the federal and provincial governments as defendants. Statements of defence have not yet been filed.

A lawsuit is the first step in a claim and contains allegations not yet proven in court.

The proposed class in this case is aboriginal students who were abused while attending Red Pheasant Day School, located on a First Nation by the same name south of North Battleford. The only named plaintiff at this point is a former student who claims he suffered sexual and physical abuse at the school he attended from 1968 to 1977.

Before a suit can proceed as a class action, it must first be certified by the courts, otherwise individuals would have to each file separately.

Merchant said another of its suits currently before the Saskatchewan courts could impact the day school claim. The firm is awaiting a ruling on certification for students of Timber Bay School at Montreal Lake in northern Saskatchewan. It was attended primarily by Metis students, who were also not part of the national residential school settlement.

Merchant is hoping ultimately the day school claims can follow the same course as those with residential schools — and that eventually the government would seek to settle with the former students.

A settlement agreement in 2006 provided compensation for residential school students. It was followed two years later by an historic apology from Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

Unlike the residential schools, provincial governments were also involved in day schools.

"Because there was some other potential wrongdoer — the provincial government — sharing the responsibility, the federal government ... would never talk about day

schools (during the negotiations for settlement on residential schools). Out of mind. Out of sight," said Merchant. According to the suit, government policy made attendance at day schools compulsory for aboriginal children between the ages of six and fifteen.

It claims the policy for both day and residential schools was the same: "Aboriginal children were to be educated to prepare them for the white man's world. Aboriginal values were denigrated. Red children were to be turned into white adults."

The one named plaintiff, now aged 51, claims he was molested by a teacher, subjected to severe corporal punishment that involved being lashed with a strap or hit with a ruler, force-fed dog biscuits, and verbally harassed and abused "for being ethnically aboriginal."

The suit suggests upwards of 800 aboriginal students attended Red Pheasant Day School.

Among the allegations, the suit claims the defendants "grossly betrayed trust," breached treaty obligations, failed to properly screen or supervise staff, and had a deliberate plan of "ethnocide."

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FSIN, province push for equal education funds

[The StarPhoenix](#)

August 24, 2013

Janet French



Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall, left, and FSIN Chief Perry Bellegarde sign a provincial memorandum of understanding at the cabinet office Friday. Photograph by: Gord Waldner, The StarPhoenix, The StarPhoenix, With Postmedia Files

More forcefully lobbying the federal government to close the funding gap between on-reserve and provincial schools is one goal of a renewed provincial agreement between the Sask. Party government and First Nations.

After signing a bipartite agreement with Premier Brad Wall Friday morning, FSIN Chief Perry Bellegarde said the prime minister's proroguing of Parliament is the perfect time for First Nations organizations to lobby hard to have issues addressed in the October speech

from the throne.

One such irritant for both the FSIN and the provincial government is the fact that First Nations schools in Saskatchewan receive 40 to 50 per cent less funding per student for K-12 education than their off-reserve counterparts.

"We, as First Nations organizations, are starting a strategic lobby," Bellegarde said. "If that message is also echoed by the various premiers across Canada, well, that helps. That puts that pressure on the federal government to make sure there's strong mention in that throne speech federally."

An FSIN-commissioned study released last March found large discrepancies in funding between federallyfunded band schools and Saskatchewan provincial schools. For instance, North Battleford-area reserve schools were running on \$7,231 per student while public and Catholic schools in the surrounding divisions had between \$10,908 to \$11,894 per student.

The study also found teacher salaries made up a smaller proportion of reserve school budgets, suggesting too much money is going to administration of band schools.

"That (funding discrepancy) is one of the main things that has to change in this next, upcoming federal budget," Bellegarde said.

Wall said Government Relations Minister Jim Reiter met with federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt earlier this year, and used the FSIN's data to drive the point home.

Education, job and skills training, housing, and any topics of shared interest will be on the table now that Bellegarde and Wall have inked a formal agreement to meet more regularly.

Signed by both leaders in Saskatoon Friday, the agreement says a political steering committee of cabinet ministers and FSIN executives will meet a couple of times a year. It also compels the government's deputy minister of government relations and First Nation, Metis and Northern affairs to meet regularly with the FSIN's executive operating officer on another committee.

Why do these bodies need a signed agreement to sit down and talk? "There's something that's a little bit more formal about this, perhaps, and little more focusing, if I can put it that way," Wall said. "I think it helps. It certainly doesn't hurt."

Staying abreast of how they can help one another - such as lobbying for more robust reserve education funding - is useful, Wall said.

The federal government has committed to putting a new education act in place by 2014 that is meant to strengthen on-reserve education systems and improve graduation rates. However, the draft of that act has raised the ire of some First Nations people, who say the proposed new policies are more top-down colonialist orders that disadvantage First Nations.

Assembly of First Nations leader Shawn Atleo has said the federal government should let First Nations devise their own education policies.

While Canada's aboriginal population grew 20 per cent between 2006 and 2011, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has capped education funding increases to two per cent per year.

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Canada-China FIPA Challenge By Hupacasath First Nation Rejected

[Canada First Perspective](#)

28 August 2013 13:20

Dene Moore

VANCOUVER - A federal court judge has dismissed an application from a small British Columbia aboriginal band trying to stop the Canada-China free trade deal.

The judge found that the Hupacasath did not establish that the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement with China will have adverse impacts on their aboriginal or self-government rights, and they will not get the judicial review they were seeking.

"On the contrary, I am satisfied that the adverse impacts which (the band) has identified are speculative, remote and nonappreciable," Chief Justice Paul S. Crampton wrote in the ruling posted on the court website Tuesday.

Ratification of the treaty does not contravene the Crown's duty to consult, he wrote.

Signed almost a year ago, the deal has provisions similar to 24 other foreign investment pacts Canada has signed since 1989, including the North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States and Mexico.

The Hupacasath First Nation, a community of about 300 people near Port Alberni on Vancouver Island, launched the court action saying the federal government failed to consult the band on a deal that could affect their rights and title.

The Hupacasath were seeking a declaration from the court that the federal government is required to consult with them before signing the agreement.

International Trade Minister Ed Fast welcomed the ruling.

"The decision supports Canada's position that the Canada-China Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) respects its obligations and does not adversely impact the rights of aboriginal peoples," Rudy Husny, Fast's spokesman, said in an email response to a request for comment.

"The agreement will come into force once both parties complete their domestic ratification processes."

Once the deal is ratified and the legislative framework in place, it will be in force for at least 15 years.

Brenda Sayers, organizer of the Hupacasath campaign, said the decision was disappointing and band officials will meet with their lawyer next week to discuss an appeal.

"It's not something that's going to just affect Hupacasath, but all First Nations and all Canadians," Sayers said.

Critics fear the deal will give foreign corporations leverage over Canadian regulatory and resource decisions, allowing Chinese corporations to seek arbitration or even sue Canada for decisions that negatively affect their access to Canadian resources.

They warned that even provinces could lose their decision-making ability on resource development once the agreement is in place.

An initial federal environmental assessment of the deal prior to the final agreement signed last year found it "will not have an impact on Canada's ability to develop and implement environmental policies and regulations."

The Hupacasath crowd-sourced more than \$160,000 to pay the legal bill, with donations from 3,000 people to an online campaign organized by the non-profit activist group LeadNow.

The band had the support of groups such as the Chiefs of Ontario, the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Auto Workers and ForestEthics.

But the Federal Court judge noted the ruling in this case does not address any other First Nations' claims regarding the treaty.

"In these circumstances, I agree that it would not be appropriate for this court to address, in any declaration that may be made in this proceeding, the issue of whether a duty to consult is owed to other First Nations, even if the formidable practical impediments to workable and meaningful consultations with the over 600 First Nations bands that exist across the country could be overcome," he wrote.

Sayers said other bands may well pursue their own court cases because the Hupacasath application did raise awareness.

"Where people paid little to no attention to trade agreements... I think more people are gaining interest in it," she said.

Stuart Trew, of the Council of Canadians, said the band will have continued support if they choose to pursue an appeal, including financial support.

"We're extremely disappointed with the decision," Trew said.

"We think there are a lot of areas where the justice, I think, underestimated the potential of these treaties to have an effect on First Nations rights and public policy."

Spence wins re-election as chief of Attawapiskat First Nation

[Global News](#)

August 28, 2013



Attawapiskat Chief Theresa Spence in Ottawa on Jan. 24, 2013. The Canadian Press

Chief Theresa Spence has reportedly been re-elected to a second three-year term as chief of the Attawapiskat First Nation in northern Ontario.

The CBC reports on its website that a final vote count is expected to be made public today.

Spence gained notoriety last winter for subsisting on fish broth and tea for six weeks as a form of protest during the rise of the Idle No More movement.

The Idle No More cause was a protest against the Conservative government's omnibus Bill C-45 which First Nations groups claimed threatened their treaty rights.

The election went ahead Tuesday despite a call from The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples to postpone it until all members living off-reserve had a chance to vote.

The group, which represents aboriginal people living off-reserve, said it's unfair to people who live outside the remote community to have to vote in person. But despite the complaint, voting went ahead.

According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the Attawapiskat First Nation has a total registered population of 3,472. Of that, 1,489 people – or about 43 per cent – live off-reserve.

The reserve is widely known for a housing crisis that prompted a state of emergency in the winter of 2011 and set off lingering tensions with the federal government.

Flooding and sewer backups this spring again forced Attawapiskat into a state of emergency and forced the First Nation to evacuate its only hospital.

Spence's protest in Ottawa last winter drew unfavourable attention to Attawapiskat with the release of a scathing audit of the band's books that found a missing paper trail for millions of dollars between 2005 and 2011.

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Illegal tobacco trade flourishing on reserves, document reveals

[Windsor Star](#)

August 28, 2013

Douglas Quan

The RCMP estimates about 50 contraband tobacco manufacturers are operating on First Nations territories in Ontario and Quebec, according to a briefing document sent to the federal public safety minister earlier this year.

The document, released under access-to-information legislation, states that dozens of organized crime groups - mostly in Central Canada - are involved in the distribution of illegal smokes and re-investing the profits they make into other crimes, including the trafficking of illicit drugs and firearms and human smuggling.

In March, the Conservative government proposed new measures, including mandatory minimum penalties for repeat offenders involved in "high volume" trafficking and the creation of a 50-member RCMP anti-contraband force, to tackle the problem.

But Prime Minister Stephen Harper's recent decision to prorogue Parliament and launch a new session in October means Bill S-16 likely will be scrapped, though it can be re-introduced.

"We can't speculate on upcoming legislation in the House of Commons, but our Government will continue to act on its commitment to keep communities safe, including finding ways to address contraband tobacco trafficking," Paloma Aguilar, press secretary for Justice Minister Peter Mac-Kay, said in an email Tuesday.

Aguilar noted that the government previously invested \$20 million into measures to disrupt the supply of and demand for contraband tobacco. However, the National Coalition Against Contraband Tobacco - a group representing convenience stores, tobacco manufacturers and growers - has expressed concerns that the illegal cigarette industry continues to thrive and is even expanding in Atlantic Canada.

According to the briefing document, Mounties believe approximately 50 contraband manufacturers are operating in Quebec's Kahnawake and Ontario's Six Nations reserves.

There are also an additional 10 manufacturers on the U.S. side of the Akwesasne Mohawk Territory, which straddles the borders of Ontario, Quebec and New York State, "giving rise to jurisdictional and legal challenges between federal, provincial and state laws," the document states.

The document notes that from 2009 to 2011, RCMP reported seizures of contraband tobacco fell from 975,000 cartons to 580,000 cartons, suggesting that enhanced enforcement efforts were making a difference.

But recent intelligence, the document said, shows a rise in counterfeit tobacco products entering the Canadian market, as well as the diversion of some raw leaf tobacco to illegal manufacturers in Ontario and Quebec.

Nunavut watchdog wants more funds for Inuit language

[Nunatsiaq News](#)

August 27, 2013



Nunavut Languages Commissioner Sandra Inutiq, speaking before the legislative assembly's standing committee on government operations this past April 17. (FILE PHOTO)

Nunavut's language rights watchdog, Sandra Inutiq, used Prime Minister Harper's visit to Nunavut last week to issue a plea for more language funding to help reverse the declining use of the Inuit language.

"If the federal government is genuine in their interest on economic development and social

progress for Nunavut, then language revitalization and protection must be properly funded,” the languages commissioner said in a news release Aug. 22.

To back that up, she pointed to a 12 per cent decline in Inuit language use at home that Statistics Canada reports for the period between 1996 and 2006.

“With a young population, language loss can accelerate rapidly. This is most worrisome. The federal transfer to the Government of Nunavut is not enough to deal with what can become a dire situation suddenly,” Inutiq said.

Under a longstanding series of federal-territorial funding agreements dating back to the mid-1980s, inherited from the Northwest Territories, Nunavut gets money from Ottawa to support Inuit languages and French.

For 2013-14, Nunavut will spend \$10.9 million on official languages, about 40 per cent of the budget of the culture and heritage department.

About \$2.5 million of that will go towards grants and contributions, and about \$1.9 million will go towards an implementation fund to carry out Nunavut’s two language laws, and \$450,000 for Inuit language promotion and protection, the GN’s main estimates for 2013-14 say.

At the same time, the Inuit Uqausinginnik Taiguusiliuqtiit Inuit language authority will get about \$2.2 million to do its work, which includes language standardization and other issues.

And a big chunk of the culture and heritage department’s official languages budget will go to salaries and benefits: about \$5.9 million.

The Nunavut languages commissioner said, however, that the Inuit language in Nunavut requires more funding for revitalization, protection and the implementation of the territory’s language laws.

“This includes a need to fund education curriculum development and creation of material, early childhood programs, adult immersion programs, as well as all media outlets in Nunavut,” Inutiq’s press release said.

Aboriginal health care: Toronto’s first stand-alone birth centre geared to cultural practices

[Toronto Star](#)

August 28, 2013

Jane Gerster



JANE GERSTER / TORONTO STAR

Sarah Dennis, at home with daughter Waasnodeh, 4, and son Waseskwan, 11 months, says having midwives open to including First Nation's traditions in the delivery made all the difference in feeling comfortable with giving birth. Dennis is Ojibwa, and her partner is Cree.

by way of her own culture involved when Sarah Dennis gave birth to her daughter, Waasnodeh, a bubbly little girl with dark, curly hair, almost five years ago.

But when Dennis got pregnant again, her midwife — Sara Wolfe from [Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto](#), a midwifery practice specializing in care for aboriginal women — helped weave culture into her overall care.

It was Wolfe who initiated the conversation, asking if Dennis, who is Ojibwa, wanted to include cultural teachings when her son Waseskwan, now 1 year old, was being delivered? Did her partner, who is Cree, need additional support to recite a few traditional Cree prayers in the delivery room?

Some aboriginal women want to incorporate specific cultural and traditional practices such as a smudging — or purification — ceremony, while others don't.

"It's not that I'm treating (an aboriginal) person differently," Wolfe said. "I'm not making her have a smudging ceremony at her birth, but if she comes to me and says, 'We want to have a smudging ceremony at the birth,' then I can help support that."

Tailoring maternity care to make it more culturally appropriate for aboriginal people isn't too complicated, she said; it's just about letting women make their own choices.

Asking such seemingly simple questions goes a long way toward making Dennis, and other aboriginal women, feel they have control over how their babies are brought into the world.

"It fits with our need and our desire to take care of ourselves right from the beginning of life ... it's what we strive for as First Nations peoples," she said. "It's just so amazing."

It's a need that's rarely met in typical health-care settings, according to numerous reports from the Health Council of Canada. [The most recent report from December highlights how discrimination keeps aboriginal people from accessing health care, especially in urban centres like Toronto.](#) Poor access is reflected in the poor health outcomes among aboriginal people, Canada's fastest-growing population.

But health council CEO John Abbott said that could start to change as one of the first provincially funded stand-alone birth centres opens in the city.

The Toronto centre, which will specialize in aboriginal care, is [one of two announced as part of a \\$6 million pilot project the province announced over a year ago.](#)

It's a big departure, Abbott said, from the top-down "we know best" approach to indigenous health-care issues.

"The fact that the Ontario government is behind it ... is going to be critical," he said. "Funding is, at the end of the day, what's going to make this be successful."

Seventh Generation Midwives Toronto is the lead practice behind the centre, and Wolfe said it is already fielding calls from women hoping to deliver their babies there.

"A lot of our clients are saying that this is something they're interested in, that they want," Wolfe said. "It's a really great first step, that we're acknowledging that First Nations people are more vulnerable in terms of health-care outcomes."

The centre, originally expected to open this summer but now bumped back to the end of the year, is also geared toward other marginalized women with low-risk pregnancies who want or need an alternative to a home or hospital birth.

The birth centre will have three full birthing rooms with tubs to allow for a water birth, as well as a consult room that will serve as a birthing room, minus a tub, in a pinch.

The centre will be in the downtown core, accessible to all of Toronto's midwives, although the exact location is still being kept under wraps.

Dennis, who said she feels pretty lucky with her maternity care, is excited for the opening since she believes it will help many aboriginal people who aren't as fortunate.

"Midwifery care is pretty intimate," Dennis said, "but having First Nations midwives who are supportive and understanding is incredible."

Ontario Health Minister Deb Matthews said the centre will be a "wonderful" space for everyone.

"I'm very excited about the potential, and I think it may well lead us to improving care in other ways for aboriginal women," she said.

To continue improving care, Abbot said it will be important for the centre's workers to closely monitor its impact on aboriginal health care once it's up and running.

"We can learn how we can expand the service not only in Ontario, but across the country," he said. "There's recognition now by mainstream health care services that there is an alternative that is legitimate, that is successful."

Success for jailed aboriginal youth

[Prince George Citizen](#)

August 28, 2013

Mark Nielsen

Aboriginal youth in custody at the Prince George Youth Containment Centre are showing a high rate of satisfaction with the programming they're receiving, according to a survey released Tuesday.

Almost all those surveyed found the programming helpful and were more likely to engage in traditional or cultural activities than youth in the other centres in Victoria and Burnaby, according to results issued by the McCreary Centre Society.

As well, 62 per cent of aboriginal youth at PGYCC felt there was enough programming for them, compared to 23 per cent in the other two centres.

However, aboriginal youth continue to be over-represented in the system. A total of 74 per cent of those at PGYCC who completed the survey were aboriginal, compared to 39 per cent in the Burnaby or Victoria centres.

The outcome for Prince George appears to reflect the changes made to youth custody services since a similar survey was conducted in 2004. PGYCC now specializes in services for aboriginal offenders, while services for female offenders have been centralized in Burnaby and Victoria has undertaken development of mental health programs and services.

As well, the number of youth in custody across the province has declined. In 2004-05, the average was 153 on any given day and by 2012-13, it was down to 85.

The McCreary Centre Society is a non-profit group "committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, education and community based projects."

In all, 114 youth completed the survey, with 20 of them at PGYCC.

Beaver Lake Cree case reveals flaws in environmental review process: Development must be assessed in a cumulative, holistic way

[Troy Media](#)

August 28, 2013

David Suzuki

VANCOUVER, BC, Aug 28, 2013/ Troy Media/ – In the 1980s, oil companies looked to the Arctic and made plans to drill in ecologically sensitive areas like Lancaster Sound. The sound is icebound for much of the year, but during its brief summer months it offers near-constant sunlight, providing habitat for birds, fish and mammals to flourish. Fossil fuel exploration and development would threaten that entire web of life.

For a *Nature of Things* television episode called "Arctic Oil", I interviewed a spokesman for Panarctic, one of the companies that wanted to drill in this unforgiving environment. Pressing his pencil onto a map of the projected site, he said the environmental consequences of a single test well were insignificant, less than the impact of the dot. He was probably right.

For a program on the proposed Great Whale Dam in Northern Quebec, Hydro Quebec's CEO showed me a map and offered a similar argument: Although the dam would flood thousands of hectares, considering the massive size of the largely uninhabited north, it was a small area. Again, he may have been right, in a limited sense. But while the human population was sparse, I saw the area as fully occupied by countless plants and animals that had evolved to thrive in that specific location, and people who had lived there for millennia.

This illustrates a fundamental flaw in the environmental assessment (EA) process: It focuses on each proposed development as something that stands alone. But an

individual well or dam is not separate or isolated from its surroundings – air, water, plants and animals pay no attention to our imposed, artificial boundaries.

We only have limited understanding of the exquisite ways in which everything on Earth is interconnected. Suppose environmental assessments had been conducted before we sprayed DDT onto open fields or topped up spray cans with CFCs. We didn't know about biomagnification or chlorine degradation of the ozone layer until long after these technologies were approved. This is a fundamental problem. We can't anticipate long-term consequences of any major technology if we are ignorant of how the world works and are too impatient to invest the time and effort to learn more through scientific research.

A second defect in the EA process is the case-by-case examination of projects as if there were no collective impacts. In Alberta, energy review boards rubber-stamp proposals to drill wells. Again, each individual well might have a tiny effect on surroundings, but wells drag a lot with them, including seismic lines, electrical wires and roads that later entice hunters and adventurers in four-wheel-drive vehicles.

A lawsuit launched by the Beaver Lake Cree Nation illustrates the problem. The Beaver Lake people are suing the federal and provincial governments for failing to uphold indigenous rights, guaranteed by treaties and the Constitution, to fish, hunt, trap and gather plants and medicines. The BLCN contends that "cumulative impacts" of the Alberta oil sands are destroying activities governments are legally bound to protect.

BLCN lands cover an area the size of Switzerland and overlap the oil sands. The territory now yields 560,000 barrels of oil a day. Industry wants to raise that to 1.6 million. BLCN land already has 35,000 oil and gas sites, 21,700 kilometres of seismic lines, 4,028 kilometres of pipelines and 948 kilometres of road. Traditional territory has been carved into a patchwork quilt, with wild land reduced to small pieces between roads, pipes and wires, threatening animals like woodland caribou that can't adapt to these intrusions.

As Alberta scientist David Schindler and others point out, provincial and federal government programs monitoring the impacts of oil sands development on air, water and land are so desultory that the data they collect are essentially meaningless. This echoes the federal government's evasive approach to climate change. The idea seems to be that if proper studies aren't conducted, we won't learn what's happening, so we can ignore any problems. That can't go on.

The BLCN court case makes us look at the impact of development in a cumulative, holistic way. As BCLN lawyer Jack Woodward said, the case "is based on protection of the entire ecosystem." If we don't take that perspective, our hacking away with small cuts will destroy the underpinnings of the whole system.

Dr. David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author, and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation.

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Artifacts unearthed during museum construction reveal Winnipeg site's importance

mySask.com

28 Aug 2013 12:46:00 CST

Steve Lambert

WINNIPEG - Tools, pieces of ceramic pots and other artifacts dating as far back as 900 years are shedding new light on the role an area of modern-day Winnipeg played in aboriginal lives.

Officials with the Canadian Museum For Human Rights, along with archaeologists, revealed Wednesday some of the 400,000 artifacts retrieved during construction of the building, which sits at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers — a place where aboriginals gathered for centuries.

Some fragments of ceramic pottery include a mixture of styles seen in First Nations pieces to the south and west. The discovery reinforces the idea that The Forks, as the site is known, was a meeting place of different cultures, said Mireille Lamontagne, the museum's manager of education programs.

"So we start to ask questions as to how were people travelling, were they inter-marrying and then sharing those traditions?"

The dig also uncovered 191 hearths or fire pits, which may suggest The Forks was more than just a gathering place — it may have also seen seasonal habitation.

Archaeologists also found maize and bean residues on ceramics, as well as hoe fragments, which suggests farming took place there centuries ago. Officials cautioned, however, that the farming implements could have been brought in from elsewhere.

Another find — an intact ceremonial pipe — is similar to those made by aboriginals far to the south and further supports the notion that sophisticated trade networks existed, Lamontagne said.

The fact that artifacts from many different cultures were found in one place also backs oral histories among local aboriginals concerning a large peace gathering of more than a half-dozen First Nations about 500 years ago.

The Forks was a location prized by many, Lamontagne said.

"It's clear ... that the wealth of resources, both plant life and animal life, made it such an attractive place to stop. It was also a strategic location, specifically in terms of things like warfare or political interaction."

The museum, which is slated to open next year, has been the subject of controversy.

Originally pushed a decade ago by the late media mogul Izzy Asper, the museum was projected to cost \$260 million. But as time went by, construction costs escalated — first to \$310 million, then to \$351 million — and governments at all levels faced increasing requests for money.

In 2007, the federal government essentially took over the project and made a commitment to cover its projected operating costs of \$21.7 million a year. It's the first national museum outside the Ottawa-Gatineau region.

Construction also caused concern that a traditional aboriginal location was being disturbed, even though it had earlier been used as a rail yard.

Stu Murray, the museum's president, defended the decision to build on the site.

"Had it not been decided that that was the site, who knows what would have gone there," he said Wednesday.

"I think at the end of the day, what we've been able to do is create something that is educational, that is all about preserving, protecting and respecting what these artifacts indeed require."

1st Annual Native Hip-Hop Festival hits Vancouver: There's more to aboriginal beats and rhymes than A Tribe Called Red

[Ottawa Citizen](#)

August 28, 2013 4:26 PM

Shawn Conner



Derek Edenshaw, also-known-as Manik 1derful. Photograph by: Jason Payne, VANCOUVER SUN

1st Annual Native Hip-Hop Festival

Aug. 30 to Sept. 1

Various locations

Info:

www.facebook.com/events/489672544426794/?ref=ts&fref=ts

Thanks, in part, to Ottawa's A Tribe Called Red, First Nations music has a higher profile in Canada than ever. But the group, which this year made the Polaris Music Prize shortlist for its album *Nation II Nation*, is only the tip of a much larger movement.

With the 1st Annual Native Hip-Hop Festival this weekend, organizer Derek Edenshaw will showcase a wide range of First Nations acts, some of whom have been making beats and rhymes for more than a decade.

The three-day festival, which runs Aug. 30-Sept. 1, brings artists from Los Angeles, New York and Spokane, as well as from across Canada, to perform at four events in Vancouver.

The festival kicks off Friday at the Musqueam Cultural Centre, on the reserve at 400 Musqueam Ave., with an all-Salish lineup that includes acts from southwest B.C. and northwestern Washington state. Savage Family from Spokane and Ostwelve from the Musqueam reservation are headliners.

Also that evening, in the Downtown Eastside — "Because why not, right?" Edenshaw says — an all-female lineup takes over Brandiz Pub. The headliner is Crystle Lightning of L.A. duo LightningCloud, which was recently named Best New Artist at the Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards. The group also beat out thousands of groups at the Battle for the Best/Who's Next 2013 competition. The top prize included a beat by famed hip-hop producer Dr. Dre.

The lineup also includes Daygot from New York, members from First Ladies Crew out of Chilliwack and Eekwol from Saskatoon.

"Hip-hop has always been a powerful way to tell stories, and oral histories have always been a way of maintaining customs and traditions," Eekwol, born Lindsay Knight, said.

"The idea of telling stories to a drumbeat has always been really appealing. As women, we like to share our experiences through talking, through lyrics, through poetry. So hip-hop becomes a really powerful tool for women to share those stories, to talk about identity and oppression."

Hip-hop is a means to help young aboriginals forge a sense of identity, says the Muskody Cree rapper, and to revitalize the culture.

"We embed a lot of the language in the lyrics," she said. "It's all about maintaining culture through this music form because it's attractive to the younger generation."

Saturday night's Nativehood show (also at Brandiz), includes some of the artists from Friday night as well as LightningCloud, Shock B from Oklahoma and Stressed

Street Allstars, which includes members from Vancouver, Winnipeg, Calgary and Saskatoon. The Nativehood show in particular will highlight the diversity in North American hip-hop.

Some artists, like Joey Stylez, don't have a political message at all, and are aiming for the mainstream. Others, like Drezus, do have messages, of course — of empowerment, of pride, of standing up for their rights.

Drezus, a Winnipeg rapper who won in the Best Rap/Hip Hop CD category for his album *Red Winter* at the Aboriginal People's Choice Music Awards this year, says the festival is overdue.

"But I think people are more open to it now. When you see American Native influence in fashion, in magazines, it opens up the minds of the general public a little more. It's overdue but at the same I'll take it for what it is, a good showcase."

On Sunday, the last day of the fest, Shop Wrong (1192 E. Hastings St.) will feature performers from the festival as well as a Native graffiti battle and a freestyle tournament.

Edenshaw has put the whole festival together on his own — "grassroots, independently, out of my pocket," he said.

He's used contacts he's made over the years as a performer, promoter and as the founder of the Native hip-hop website RedHipHop.com, which he started in 2000.

"I had a gut feeling that somebody else was going to try and do the same festival, and I wasn't going to sit back and wait," said the 33-year-old, who is of Haida Raven/Metis-Cree descent. "So, this year, I just did it. I called all the troops."

There are many more Native hip-hop artists now than when he started, he notes. And the community is benefiting from veterans of the scene who have learned from their mistakes and can mentor younger musicians.

"I was of the generation that broke the taboo," Edenshaw said. "There weren't that many when I first started out — a few in each region, if that. We had to fight for our respect."

Still, most rural First Nations communities cling to blues and country music, he says. But Edenshaw thinks hip-hop has the potential to give voice to the people.

"Aboriginal people are in need of our very own Bob Marley," he said. "I'm hoping native hip-hop will provide that."

U of S spreads love of math to First Nations students: Math Mania uses real-world examples to teach skills

[CBC News](#)

Aug 28, 2013 2:30 PM ET



Students taking part in the University of Saskatchewan's Math Mania program. (University of Saskatchewan)

Professors from the University of Saskatchewan are hitting the road.

They're travelling to First Nations communities across Saskatchewan, trying to instill a love of math in young students. Called 'Math Mania,' the program uses real-world examples from the lives of First Nations students to teach abstract math concepts.

'Since it applies and it's tangible, they are easily motivated.' — *Stavros Stavrou, tutor*

"We just start with something from the culture," tutor Stavros Stavrou said. "For example, building fish racks, something that these students can relate to and identify with. Then, we look at the mathematics related to that. So, for example, if they're building a rectangular fish rack, and we have a fixed perimeter, we give them Popsicle sticks, and they need to make the largest possible rectangle in order to maximize the number of fish they can put on it."

Stavros said the approach seems to be working.

"Since it applies and it's tangible, they are easily motivated," he said. "[As opposed to] coming in and teaching abstract concepts."

Math professor Chris Soteris said it's important to get more First Nations students interested in math at a young age. She said First Nations students are underrepresented in math and science programs at universities and that needs to change.

"The idea was to see what we could do to motivate them earlier so that they recognized that math was a very important component to science," she said.

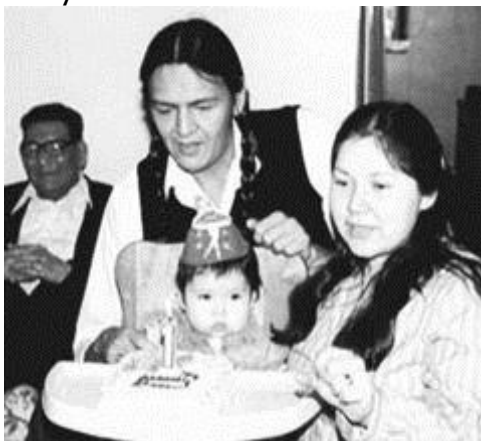
The program also provides teachers working on reserves with specialized lesson plans geared toward First Nations students.

A mom beaten, a son changed: Trauma still vivid in Robinson's mind

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

August 29, 2013

Larry Kusch



Eric Robinson and his wife, Catherine, with their daughter, Shaneen, in this undated photo. Robinson's father is seen at left. (HANDOUT)

Eric Robinson

- **Born:** Feb. 5, 1953, in Norway House. He's a member of Cross Lake First Nation. He was placed in a residential school in Norway House at age five and remained there for three years. He was raised mainly by his father.
- **Career before politics:** Worked in a variety of jobs, including as a dishwasher in Churchill, a drug and alcohol counsellor in British Columbia, a DJ and copywriter in private radio and as an on-air personality with the CBC in B.C., Churchill and Thompson. He also was a longtime activist with various aboriginal organizations and worked as a researcher for the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in Manitoba. He co-authored a book, *The Infested Blanket: Canada's Constitution-Genocide of Indian Nations*, which was published in 1985.
- **Political career:** First elected to the Manitoba legislature in a byelection in 1993 for the northern constituency of Rupertsland. The constituency is now called Keewatinook. He has been a cabinet minister since 1999, when the NDP gained power, and now serves as minister responsible for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs and Sport Manitoba.
- **Family:** He and his wife of 35 years, Catherine, have one daughter, Shaneen.

As a 10-year-old boy, Eric Robinson looked on in horror as his mother was badly beaten, a transformative event that would influence his future political career.

"Her non-aboriginal boyfriend was beating the hell out of her, hitting her like a man would hit another man in a boxing match," Robinson recalls.

"I tried to defend her and I was knocked against the wall" and lost consciousness.

The young Robinson, by then a survivor of three horrific years in a northern residential school, remembers coming to the next morning in his mother's arms.

"Here she was cuddling me, trying to be a mother, and yet when I woke up to see what this guy did to her, it was simply appalling," he recalled in an interview Wednesday.

His mother, an orphan who spent virtually all her childhood in a residential school, would not play a significant role in his upbringing. "She (later) died a miserable street death," Robinson said.

Fast-forward half a century and Robinson, now a 20-year MLA and a longtime cabinet minister who has championed the cause of learning the truth about hundreds of murdered and missing Canadian aboriginal women, is on the political hot seat.

A Winnipeg women's shelter, at odds with the province over funding and other issues, has obtained an internal government email in which Robinson referred to backers of a fundraiser as "do-good white people." His critics have labelled the comment racist and demanded his removal from cabinet.

It's why, in telling the story about his mother, he refers to her "non-aboriginal boyfriend." "I can't say 'white' anymore," he deadpanned Wednesday, revealing an ever-present sense of humour.

Speaking in 2008 about his residential-school experience, Robinson said he could "still taste the lye soap placed in my mouth for speaking my language, Cree."

In an address in the Manitoba legislature, he said being molested at a young age by a priest brought him "a lifetime of pain and anguish. Being told it was my fault and later learning to blame everyone around me has taken a toll on my personal relationships."

Later on, alcohol and drugs were a temporary relief but only accelerated his feelings of despair, he said.

But in 1976, through a combination of conventional treatment and traditional teachings, he "sobered up." After receiving a certificate in drug and alcohol counselling, he worked for a time with the down and out in northern B.C.

For a good part of the 1970s and early 1980s, he held a series of broadcasting jobs, winding up with the CBC in Thompson.

From there, he worked as an activist with a number of aboriginal organizations and landed a job in the late 1980s doing research and conducting prison-inmate interviews for the landmark Aboriginal Justice Inquiry.

As a cabinet minister in the Doer government, beginning in 1999, he would be instrumental in implementing many of the report's recommendations, including placing control of First Nations child welfare in aboriginal hands.

Robinson was a driving force behind the formation of the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation, named after the aboriginal high school student who was abducted and murdered near The Pas in 1971.

The foundation will this year surpass the \$1-million mark in bursaries that enable aboriginal students to attend post-secondary school.

In the legislature this week, Premier Greg Selinger, in defending his embattled minister, noted Robinson was one of the first to meet with Osborne's family to acknowledge their suffering. Asked Wednesday in what capacity he made the visit to a family he knew of but not well, Robinson replied: "as a fellow human being."

Meanwhile, Robinson said witnessing his mother's brutal beating as a boy has helped direct his actions ever since.

"I think that's what ignited a bit of the fire in my stomach to this day to do what I can for marginalized people, particularly women," he said.

"I haven't been an angel all my life either, but at the very least I've done my best to be a protector of the life-givers of our people."

Rheumatoid arthritis among aboriginal people being studied: Researchers studying patients, family members in northern Manitoba community

[CBC News](#)

Aug 29, 2013 6:41 AM CT



A research team member, left, checks a patient's joints in St. Theresa Point, Man., this week. (Jillian Taylor/CBC)

A Winnipeg medical researcher is trying to figure out why First Nations people seem to be more prone to developing rheumatoid arthritis compared to the rest of the Canadian population.

Dr. Hani El-Gabalawy and his team have flown to St. Theresa Point in northern Manitoba to study the family members of those who have rheumatoid arthritis, in the hopes of gaining a better understanding of how the inflammatory joint disease develops.

El-Gabalawy says rheumatoid arthritis affects two to three per cent of Canada's aboriginal population, which is at least double the rate in the rest of the country.

Experts consider that difference to be very significant, which is why the research is underway to determine possible causes.

"We understand now that it's not just genetics and it's not just environment. It's actually the interaction between genetics and the environment," El-Gabalawy told CBC News.

He said First Nations individuals have a gene that puts them at a higher risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis, and factors like tobacco smoke and gum disease may cause the gene to trigger the onset of the disease.

"The disease clusters in families," he added.

Remote community

St. Theresa Point is a remote First Nation community located about 460 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg.



The nursing station in St. Theresa Point, Man. (Jillian Taylor/CBC)

Agnes Harper, who is taking part in the research, says she developed rheumatoid arthritis in her early 30s and has been taking medication for the past 35 years.

"It's very painful. I felt it in my hands the worst," she said. "The first time it was on my shoulder, then it went to my knees."

Living in St. Theresa Point, which is accessible only by air, can make it challenging for people with rheumatoid arthritis to get proper care.

By studying the family members of First Nation members with rheumatoid arthritis, El-Gabalawy said he hopes to prevent future cases from happening.

"We feel this will make a difference in terms of intervening in a very timely manner to address the earliest stage of the disease, but we hope ... to actually get a handle on prevention even before the disease starts," he said.

Brian Sinclair, Winnipeg Aboriginal Who Died After 34-Hour Hospital Wait, Assumed 'Sleeping It Off'

[Huffington Post](#)

August 29, 2013

Chinta Puxley



A drummer pays homage to Brian Sinclair whose body was placed in a hearse after funeral service in this Sept 26, 2008 photo, in Winnipeg. Winnipeg police say they will launch a criminal investigation into the death of a homeless man who waited for 34 hours in a hospital's emergency room. THE CANADIAN PRESS/ Winnipeg Free Press - Wayne Glowacki

WINNIPEG - A man who died during a lengthy wait in a hospital emergency room vomited on the floor during his final hours, but a security guard on duty said he assumed Brian Sinclair was intoxicated and "sleeping it off."

Alain Remillard told an inquest that a man in the waiting room at Winnipeg's Health Sciences Centre informed him that Sinclair had either thrown up or soiled himself.

At that point, Sinclair was 24 hours into a 34-hour wait for care.

Remillard said he walked toward Sinclair, saw a clear liquid at the base of his wheelchair and called housekeeping to clean it up. Remillard said he assumed Sinclair had "peed himself" rather than vomited because the liquid was clear.

"I never spoke to him," the guard testified Thursday. "I was assuming at the time that he was sleeping. Since he posed no security threat, I didn't feel it was necessary to wake him up."

In cross-examination by the Sinclair family lawyer, Remillard said he noticed the man was dishevelled, aboriginal and a double amputee.

"At the time, I did assume he was somewhat intoxicated and sleeping it off," he said when pressed.

It's not unusual for people to vomit in the emergency department, so Remillard said he "didn't think it was a medical issue."

"I didn't think it was worth notifying nursing staff. It was more a housekeeping issue."

Medical experts have testified that Sinclair vomiting was a sign his body was going into shock. The inquest has heard that Sinclair vomited several other times before he died of a treatable bladder infection caused by a blocked catheter in September 2008.

Sinclair had been referred to the emergency room by a local clinic because he hadn't urinated in 24 hours. The 45-year-old is seen on security footage being wheeled into the emergency department and speaking to a triage aide. The aide writes something on a piece of paper before Sinclair wheels himself into the waiting room. He doesn't appear to leave the emergency department again. That piece of paper has never been found.

Security guard David Trump, who was also working the night Sinclair was found dead, said Remillard pointed out Sinclair in the aisle of the waiting room when Trump came on duty.

Trump said he was told to "watch his step" because Sinclair had "made a mess on the floor." Sinclair was also described as "an obstruction" in the aisle, but there was "nowhere else to put him," Trump said.

Sinclair was a regular at the hospital, but Trump said he wouldn't have made special note of him.

"I could have walked past him 100 times," he said. "Until they pose a threat ... they are basically not on our radar."

Leslie Spillett, executive director of the Winnipeg aboriginal organization Ka Ni Kanichihk, said it seems people made assumptions about Sinclair based on his race. She suggested people probably wouldn't have assumed he was intoxicated had he been white.

"Racism does not apply in the same way to white people as it does to people of colour — and particularly the stereotype of alcohol and indigenous people. It certainly does not apply in the same way," she said outside court.

"I think the reason why we're here is to look at the extent to which race, class, homelessness and disability played in this particular case."

While the hospital has made a lot of changes to the way people are admitted, it will take longer to change people's attitudes, Spillett said.

Several security guards have testified they raised concerns with triage staff about Sinclair but he was never examined by medical staff.

Security guard Peter Van Den Oever said he was on duty when Sinclair vomited a second time. He said he gave Sinclair a small bowl and then told the same triage aide who spoke to Sinclair the day before that Sinclair "didn't look good."

"I believe he heard me," Van Den Oever said. "I thought he would follow up."

Van Den Oever said everyone was "dumbfounded" when they heard Sinclair had died.

Another security guard has testified he also raised concerns with a triage nurse about the length of time Sinclair appeared to have been waiting. The guard said he was told Sinclair had been treated and released but had returned to the hospital.

Garth Smorang, lawyer for the Manitoba Nurses Union, suggested there are often many people in the emergency department who aren't waiting for treatment. Some people are waiting for test results, homeless people come in to take shelter and family and friends of patients can also be found there, he said.

Remillard said security would have no problem alerting nursing staff if someone were in medical distress.

"If someone were to have a seizure, I would notify the triage nurse immediately."

The inquest has heard that Sinclair was well-known in the emergency room and had come there dozens of times. He lost both his legs to frostbite in 2007 when he was found frozen to the steps of a church in the dead of winter.

The hearing was to adjourn Thursday until October when it is scheduled to hear from medical staff who were working while Sinclair was waiting to be seen.